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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COSTA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 24, 2021.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM COSTA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2021, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GREEN ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the Nation watched in horror at the terrible situation in Texas this last week with horrific weather conditions and then the aftermath dealing with problems with safe drinking water and supply. It was leavened a little bit by the plight of TED CRUZ who is notoriously struggling to tell the truth this time as he fled his State and leaving his constituents behind and then

watching him contort trying to change his story over the course of the next few days. It was sort of a national joke.

But what was happening in Texas was not a joke. These conditions were unprecedented. But they found Texas unable to really respond in a way despite the fact that 10 years ago there was a similar situation. It is fascinating. TED CRUZ isn't the only one struggling with the truth. The Governor of Texas, Governor Abbott, sought to blame wind energy for their plight. Wind energy, which supplies less than 10 percent of the total energy supply for the State, performed better than fossil fuel which provided the majority of it.

Think for a moment how they attempted to target the Green New Deal and AOC. While TED CRUZ was struggling to get his story straight, our colleague, ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ, was raising millions of dollars to help people in Texas cope. Blaming a Green New Deal which has never actually been enacted—it is an aspirational goal—is foolish. What we have seen in Texas with those extreme weather events are a preview of coming attractions.

What we saw in Australia this last year and in the Western United States with horrific wildfires, looking at a once-in-a-century weather event is becoming routine, and it is going to happen more and more frequently.

I would suggest that Texas leadership could take a look at what they have done. Their famously deregulated energy system has given the family with a \$16,000 electric bill or former Governor and Energy Secretary Rick Perry said: Well, people would just be happy to have a few days without energy to be free of the dangers of Federal regulation.

I think people in the surrounding States that survived much better and didn't have \$16,000 monthly electric bills might review that. I would suggest that the folks in Texas leadership

could start first of all by telling the truth. It is not renewable energy, it was fossil fuel that failed and continued reliance on fossil fuel is going to make events like this much, much more frequent.

We need to deal with reliability in Texas and around the country. Last, but not least, we must fight for climate justice and a low carbon future. That will help make these situations less frequent and more bearable, and it is a path forward that we can take confident that history will reflect we were on the right side.

BIDEN COVID BAILOUT PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. Speaker, over the past year, the government has appropriated over \$4 trillion—that is with a T—in COVID relief. Now we are standing here this week and we are debating whether or not to add another \$2 trillion to that enormous total.

But what should shock taxpayers across the country is that \$1 trillion of COVID relief still remains unspent. That means funding is still left over from last December and funding is still left over from even last March. Now, that is money that the current administration hasn't spent for vaccines, hasn't spent for testing, hasn't spent on schools reopening, and certainly not even to reopen our country.

Mr. Speaker, I think people in Washington often forget that the dollars that we are debating really aren't ours. They are the next generation's, and this money belongs to that generation and to the American people.

Is it not too much to ask what the current administration plans to do with the \$1 trillion in unspent taxpayer funds, Mr. Speaker, especially before we toss another \$2 trillion on to that pile?

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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This is a basic question that would come up during a family budget discussion with a lot less zeros, much less the Government of the United States talking about trillions of dollars.

But before and beyond the unspent funds, what the Democrat package does spend money on is yet another partisan wish list with about 9 percent of it actually going to COVID. Meaning 91 percent of it is not even COVID-related.

Mr. Speaker, this bill's minimum wage increase, for instance, would kill 1.4 million blue-collar jobs, and its unemployment insurance hike would keep incentivizing workers to stay at home, which is a real struggle in my district when an employer wants 2,000 people to come back to work and they are competing with the Federal Government. This makes it worse.

Under this bill, Mr. Speaker, stimulus checks would go to illegal immigrants. Under this bill, taxpayer funding for abortion is allowed, and Planned Parenthood is eligible for PPP loans. Under this bill, funding is allowed to flow to colleges and universities that partner with companies that are controlled by Communist China. Under this bill, \$110 billion would be sent to schools, regardless if they reopen or not. There is no support for families who are desperate for educational options for their kids.

Obviously, of course, Democrats hid irrelevant spending in this bill, just like environmental justice grants, \$800 million in aid to other countries, and a \$112 million earmark for a big tech subway in Silicon Valley.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is we are again debating a liberal wish list disguised as COVID relief. The American people aren't fooled by any of this. They see through the game, and they know that this town can and should do better.

COLOMBIA FAILS TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, over the past two decades, I have traveled to Colombia more than a dozen times. On each trip, I have had the privilege of meeting human rights defenders and social leaders.

In cities, towns, and remote rural areas, these brave men, women, and young people have confronted violence all their lives, and they and their communities are targeted by illegal armed groups—paramilitaries, guerrillas, and criminal organizations. They have been targets of the Colombian military and too often harassed and under illegal surveillance by the state. Simply for speaking on behalf of others, organizing to meet basic needs, or carrying out the duties of their profession—teacher, doctor, farmer, lawyer, journalist, and pastor—they are threatened, assaulted, and murdered.

During my last trip to Colombia, I spent a few days in the mountains of northern Cauca. I met with indigenous leaders defending their right to ancestral lands. I met with Afro-Colombian leaders creating small enterprises to support their families and their children. I met with demobilized FARC soldiers hoping to build a new life and future. I met with campesino farmers determined to stop growing coca and move into the legal economy.

We sat together, and we ate together. They shared their plans and they shared their dreams with me. They dream of a Colombia at peace and a Colombia that values all of its people, including those who have struggled to survive in Colombia's most violent rural areas.

Brave, generous, intelligent, creative, vulnerable, and humble, these leaders literally have bet their lives on the peace accord being fully implemented. They are counting on the peace accord to deliver the protection, economic development, truth, and justice it promised.

But the Colombian state has abandoned them, just as it has throughout all Colombia's history. The state has failed to put in place the individual and community-based protections demanded by the peace accord. The state has failed to dismantle the criminal networks and armed actors who daily threaten the lives of social leaders. The state has failed to identify and prosecute those who finance, profit by, and order the murders and violence aimed at human rights defenders and social leaders. Even worse, the Colombian state has chosen to remain absent from large parts of the country, failing to establish state presence, basic services, and leaving local leaders defenseless.

Since the peace accord was signed, over 500 rights defenders have been murdered, according to the United Nations human rights representative. Colombia's own ombudsman reports even higher numbers, documenting more than 700 murders during that same period, and nongovernmental organizations place the total even higher.

Rather than seeing this grim reality as a call to action, the government of President Ivan Duque has tried to obscure the number of murder victims. His government defends all the promises it has made on paper without changing by one iota the reality on the ground. It acts as if these murders and threats were some kind of public relations crisis, a battle over statistics and optics.

But it is not a PR problem. It is lives on the line. Economists have written books on the importance of human capital in the development of a prosperous economy. Lack of political will to prevent these murders and protect these local leaders is literally bleeding Colombia of the very human capital it needs to consolidate peace and create a more prosperous and dynamic future.

Two weeks ago, Human Rights Watch issued a report on the murders of Co-

lombia's social leaders and human rights defenders. It outlines practical actions and reforms the Colombian federal, state, and municipal governments could take to prevent, reduce, and even stop the murders and violence. Sadly, these recommendations were met with indifference, by hostility, or rejected out of hand. They were treated more like bad press than a serious attempt to offer help and provide a road map to interrupt the spiral of violence.

That is why I am calling on the Biden administration to make the protection of human rights defenders and social leaders one of America's highest priorities in its relationship with Colombia. The Biden administration and Congress should review the Human Rights Watch report and determine how U.S. policy and aid can advance the full implementation of the peace accord, support its protective and justice mechanisms, and help fulfill its promises of economic development in neglected areas.

I call upon my colleagues to stand up for peace, for human rights, and for an end to the violence against human rights defenders and social leaders in Colombia. These courageous social leaders deserve nothing less than America's full and unconditional support.

PROTECTING OUR MOST SACRED FREEDOMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, government intervention often causes more harm than good. I have spent my time in Congress working to protect individual freedoms from unnecessary bureaucratic burdens.

I recognize that a strong family is vital to our Nation's progress and prosperity, which is why I have worked to advance legislation that allows families to flourish and protects life at all stages. It is unconscionable that in America, where we fight for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we tolerate the systemic extermination of an entire generation. The right to life demands that we protect our Nation's most vulnerable, including the unborn.

Our First Amendment is a powerful instrument that has protected our most sacred freedoms for hundreds of years.

□ 1015

Few other countries provide the same protections and freedoms that our First Amendment guarantees. We are the land of the free because of it. Our individual liberties are the envy of people around the world and they are the cornerstone of the world's oldest democracy.

Yet, today, these essential rights are under attack. H.R. 5 is the latest example of Democrats' misleading and partisan manner of legislating.